

mean that his position *vis à vis* the Confederation is wholly negligible. The influence that an individual ruler exerts over a confederation of tribesmen depends to a large extent on the personality of the individual and I found plenty of evidence that Sultan 'Ali bin Mansur is universally respected, admired, and held in affection amongst the Shenafr tribesmen. Even though his word is not universally law his services are much sought in mediation between different factions, and there is no lack of factions in the Confederation. Along the length of the valley from the east of Shibam to the east of Tarim, which is considered Kathiri, village after village is a small city-state on its own. It is difficult to pass from one to another, even now that the motor-car has come, without the traditional *siyar* or escort. 43
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Typical of the situation has been the state of war that has existed for some time between the Al 'Umar and Al 'Amr clans. They have centred round the respectably-sized town of Al Ghurfa between Shibam and Seiyun. Five or six years ago some of the tribesmen of the Al 'Umar started interfering with the inhabitants of Al Ghurfa. Bin 'Abdat, the 'aqil of the Al 'Amr, protested to Salim bin Ja'fer, the 'aqil of the Al 'Umar, and proposed that they should unite to make peace in Al Ghurfa. Hitherto disputes in the town were commonly referred to the settlement of one Sheikh Bā Abūd, but this arrangement appears to have broken down. Bin 'Abdat informed Bin Ja'fer that if he would not help him, he (Bin 'Abdat) would establish control in the town himself. As Bin Ja'fer did not give him support he took action himself and established order. The new state of affairs was not popular, and probably resulted in some further disorder which had its repercussions beyond local limits. At this juncture the Qu'aiti *wazir* came to Shibam and brought pressure on Sultan 'Ali bin Mansur to unite with him and Salim bin Ja'fer in compelling Bin 'Abdat to vacate Al Ghurfa, and retire to his original place outside. Sultan 'Ali bin Mansur marched against Bin 'Abdat with one gun and some troops; Seiyid Hussein, the Qu'aiti *wazir*, also brought a gun and some troops from Shibam, Salim bin Ja'fer brought his own men, and the three forces collected at Al Ghiyel. The town of Al Ghurfa was bombarded, and, as it was described to me, "they had a good battle but without success". 578
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Seiyid Hussein, the *wazir*, retired after having successfully complicated the issue, and Sultan 'Ali immediately followed suit, leaving Bin 'Abdat and Bin Ja'fer to fight it out together. Both sides entrenched themselves. The elaborate system of fortifications and communication trenches, still visible at Al Ghurfa, reminded me strongly of France. They extend over nearly a mile, and in this small patch of the valley both sides lived an uncomfortable life for several years. Any cultivation that was done was done under difficulties, and the fields could only be approached through trenches. Salim bin Ja'fer enlivened the proceedings by importing a sort of armoured car from Java. This is now derelict [62]
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715 and is offered for sale at Al Ghurfa. It has yet, presumably, other chances of featuring in small wars up or down the valley.

[726] The situation sounds almost incredible, but the war continued for several years. At last Sultan 'Ali supported by the Al Kaf Seiyids, the strongest influence for peace in Kathiri territory, thought matters had gone far enough, and invited the disputants to Seiyun to conclude a peace. The terms suggested were agreed to on all points except for one requiring Bin 'Abdat to demolish two small forts. The matter appeared to have reached a deadlock when a Seiyid of Aden, of Hadhramaut origin, Seiyid 'Abdur Rahman al Jifri, proceeded to the Hadhramaut and offered his services in the settlement of the trouble. He is a friend of Bin 'Abdat's, and Seiyids 'Abdur Rahman and Bubekr al Kaf sent him to Bin 'Abdat to advise him not to hold out on account of the two small forts. Matters were probably ripe for a settlement as everybody was tired of hostilities, but Seiyid 'Abdur Rahman very creditably brought the feud to a satisfactory conclusion. What was even more satisfactory was that a gathering of more than a hundred representatives of all sections of the Shenafir was held at Seiyun, and Seiyid 'Abdur Rahman succeeded in assisting Sultan 'Ali, backed by the Al Kaf Seiyids, to negotiate a truce between all the Shenafir tribes. This agreement, which takes effect from the 1st of Sha'bān 1353 (9th November 1934) provides for a truce of two years and two months in all matters relating to blood feuds between the various tribes, and gives also a guarantee of five years security for travellers on the routes.

413 It may thus be that the foundations have now been laid for an era of peace in Kathiri land, and the time seems to be propitious for the establishment of a greater solidarity in Kathiri rule. There are certainly strong elements in favour of peace. Foremost of all is Sultan 'Ali himself. He is a man of culture and very charming personality with that kind of magnetism which inspires instinctive respect and affection. I do not think anybody who has met him can fail to receive the impression that he is a good man in the best sense of the word, nor can anyone who has discussed the situation with him fail to be impressed with the earnestness of his desire for peace. In this desire he is warmly and ably supported by many of the leading families, of whom the most important are the Al Kaf and Saqqaf Seiyids. Although they are Seiyids the measures of reform which these families support are many of them in flagrant opposition to the old conservative policy of the Seiyids, which for long maintained that body as the most powerful and the most desperately retrogressive party in the Hadhramaut. These families have shown that they can still play a very important part in the destinies of the country, and have in fact earned the right to speak in common voice with the Sultan in pressing reforms. It may also be observed that they are the heaviest, as well as the most willing, taxpayers in the country. Their annual contributions on Government and charitable undertakings amount to at least \$70,000 a year, without counting the great expenditure

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Armoured car near Al Ghurfa



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Trenches at Al Ghurfa [Facing p. 300 (A)]